



Laniarius

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BirdLife Northern Gauteng
BirdLife Gauteng-Noord

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Credits

Front cover: Greater Painted-Snipe/Goudsnip, Zaagkuildrift, by Nicole Crisp

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Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of BirdLife Northern Gauteng or BirdLife South Africa.

From the (new!) Editor



“Wet, wet, wet, everywhere was wet”.....
Wlse’s words in an outing report could serve as a synopsis of the most wonderful birding summer of 2021/22 many of us experienced this season. This, of course, includes the long-postponed but glorious Flock to Marion end of January 2022 on the Great Wet, but specifically refers to the high rainfall, flooding, lush vegetation, and the bumper crop of birds turning up in Greater Northern Gauteng to utilise the effects of La Niña here. We birders have had the great privilege of witnessing many interesting bird species cropping up in unexpected places in wider Gauteng.

Flocks of hundreds of White Stork and impressive numbers of Abdim’s Stork turned up in Gauteng, the first time in years, and were seen roosting on mine dumps, on lamp poles next to the N3 in Johannesburg, circling over rubbish dumps, and feeding at Rooiwal. African Crane, hundreds of Lesser Moorhen, Dwarf Bittern and Painted Snipe became a frequent sight at Kgomo-Kgomo and on Zaagkuildrift Road. For the first time in years the elusive Corn Crane became a reliable sighting at Rooiwal Sewage Works and one even turned up briefly in Rietvlei Nature Reserve. Rooiwal also delivered Painted Snipe, Harlequin Quail and regular Western Yellow Wagtail. Eurasian Bittern, many years ago a regular to Nylsvley but sadly no more, caused great excitement under hopeful twitchers when it appeared a few times at Mongena Dam. On the Magalies Hiking Trail we ticked Pygmy Kingfisher, European Nightjar, Violet-eared Waxbill, Grey Tit-flycatcher, and even River Warbler, none of these common in Pretoria city suburbs.

Much of the country, except for parts of the Eastern Cape, was also inundated with rains. I may bear testimony to this, just

having returned from a two-week holiday in the Cape. Mountainsides are emerald green. Gauteng, the Free State, and most of the Karoo is magnificent, covered in lush golden grass, each and every pan or dam filled to the brim, bright and shining as coins. Waterbirds abound. Coot, heron and egret are everywhere. Dirt roads became exercises in mud wrestling. The South African viewer public was treated to images of major dams like the Gariep and Vaal overflowing, water roaring through Augrabies Falls in majestic spectacles, rivers such as the Swakop reaching the sea the first time in decades, Boesmanland blooming.

Not only birders, but the whole of South Africa rejoiced over the generous rains. And this is why, as the new Editor of *Laniarius*, I have had the privilege of choosing a cover photograph which symbolises the exceptional birding we enjoyed this wet season. Thank you, Nicole Crisp, for allowing us to use your breath-taking photograph of a Painted Snipe on the flooded Zaagkuildrift Road. It is quite exquisite.

Thanks also to every contribution from BLNG-members which celebrate our club outings, camps, our mission of bird conservation which promotes the preservation of our stunning avian and natural heritage for future generations. I end this with an excerpt from the well-known poem of Mary Oliver, *The Summer Day*:

*To pay attention-
This is our endless and proper work.
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.*

Ivonne

From the Chair



As a club, the BLNG committee and members are very excited that most of our activities have resumed after nearly two years of “lock-down” and “social distancing” due to the Covid-19 virus.

The year 2022 started with the Flock to Marion voyage to Marion Island on the MSA Orchestra. The main purpose of this trip was to raise awareness and funds for the Mouse-Free Marion Island project. Birdlife South Africa needs to be saluted for this fantastic event, that was attended by approximately 1500 birders of whom were about 40 BLNG members. Apart from the many wonderful bird sightings and lectures, we really enjoyed meeting up with our many birding friends we had not seen during the past two years. This event will be fondly remembered for a very long time.

The BLNG AGM that was held in February was a very festive candlelight event, because of the unplanned power breakdown at our venue. I once again realised how special the BLNG members are when they started arriving with candles, lights, an inverter and even a generator. We were able to continue with the AGM, with Zoom up and running for our guest speaker, dr. Anton Wolfaardt joining us virtually from Cape Town, as well as a good number online BLNG members.

Dr Anton Wolfaardt is the project manager for the Mouse-Free Marion Project, and he shared why this is a critical project to save the

Wandering Albatross and other seabirds breeding at Marion Island; the scope, the challenges, the costs and benefits of the biggest conservation project that BLSA has to date undertaken.

We are very happy to report that BLNG is in a healthy state, with some 60 new members that joined. The year ended with a full program and in a positive financial status.

The BLNG conservation team initiated the Secretary Bird project, which is progressing very well. This project is run in close conjunction with BLSA. Our club has four secretary birds that have been fitted with tracking devices and an additional youngster has been ringed. The movements of these birds are tracked and shared with our members and the impact of global warming on the secretary birds will be investigated during the coming year.

Our Bird Ringing group, consisting of 29 active A-ringers and 3 trainee C-ringers have ringed an impressive 9700 birds during 2021.

Once again, thank you to all our members, outing leaders, committee and sub-committee members for making BLNG such a special and exciting club.

Elouise

WELCOME TO BLNG!

Aan alle nuwe lede – baie welkom! Ons sien daarna uit om julle by ons aandvergaderings, daguitstappies of tydens 'n naweekkamp te leer ken.

We trust you will enjoy your birding with us. Please contact Fransie at secretary@blng.co.za or 0727370862 if you have any queries or requests.

Chriselle & Andries du Toit, Lynnwood; Megan Greyvenstein, Centurion; Dorothea & Christopher Whittle, Eldoraigine X3; Hanjo Gouws, Brummeria; Marius Mathey, Wapadrand; Salomé & Martin Minie, Pierre van Rhyneveld Park; Elandré Scherman, Elarduspark; Maryke Carstens & Marco Gagiano, Lynnwood Ridge; Henelia Massyn, Brooklyn; Nanet & Drikus Pieters, Mōregloed; Sal du Venage, Irene; William Rapp, Clubview; Danie Knipe, Lynn East



President's address

Along with a number of BLNG club members I was at the Flock at Sea to Marion

Island recently. It seemed inconceivable that the trip would take place as recently as December last year but then the fog of uncertainty around Covid lifted and we were able to sail into Antarctic waters at the end of January this year. During this trip I enjoyed the experience of being in the waters of the southern oceans with its bounty of birds and wildlife. But in addition, the interaction with other birders during the trip was immensely satisfying and it was pleasing to renew my acquaintance with people I know but had little contact with over the last two years. The camaraderie and spirit of friendship was wonderful to behold.

This brought into focus the role that a bird club plays in a birder's development. This year is my 38th year of membership of our club and like many other long-standing members I have met a great many fellow birders over the years, participated in many events and outings, and visited many interesting locations that I otherwise would never

have managed to see. But most importantly, I have through my contact with other club birders over time learned everything I know about birds and birding. It started with identification skills, then moved to listening to and memorising bird calls, and more recently branched out to bird photography, which in itself is a whole new field to discover. There is no substitute for the bond that exists between fellow birders due to the shared interest we have and the knowledge gained over a period of time through the interaction with our peers. I firmly believe that a club like ours provides the best platform to gain experience and to become an accomplished birder!

BirdLife Northern Gauteng / Gauteng-Noord is a well-managed club with very good membership retention and recruitment of new members. There has always been a good programme of activities and events at our club. We have an excellent committee that keeps matters on an even keel and my thanks go to Elouise Kalmer and her team for the dedication they show to the club. May I wish all of you a superb year ahead filled with good health and good birding!

André Marx

What is a 'feral' species?

A'feral' species is one that is now living freely in a wild state, having either escaped or been released from captivity. It is often regarded as a kind of 'halfway house' between 'tame' and 'wild', and ceases to apply when a population has become entirely self-sustaining. So a Ring-necked Parakeet is no longer considered as feral in South Africa, whereas birds like the Red-crested Parakeet and Mandarin Duck still are, because they have yet to establish a fully wild population (and may be well on their way to doing so in Gauteng). However, the best known species in the category, the Feral Pigeon (also known as the Rock Dove), retains the title despite being a common and successful bird.

FLOCK to Marion 2022

The BirdLife South Africa Expedition to our Southern Ocean Islands

On 24 January 2022, after years of planning and postponements, some 1,700 jubilant birders, national and international guides, experts and officials set sail from Cape Town aboard the MSC Orchestra on an eight-day voyage en route to Marion and Prince Edward Islands. BLNG was well-presented, and club members were excited to meet each other on board.

How did we prepare for the voyage? Apart from packing warm clothes, binoculars, scopes (those of us lucky enough to possess one), bird books and more, Pre-Flock ID Webinars were well attended. The BLSA Seabird and Mammal Identification Workshops focused on the 'Big Birds' (Albatrosses and Giant Petrels), 'Medium Birds' (Skuas, Shearwaters and Petrels), 'Small Birds' (Storm and Diving Petrels, Prions), 'Other Birds' (Coastal Seabirds and Penguins) and 'Mammals' (Whales, Dolphins and Seals).

One BLNG member commented:

'My camera equipment and laptop are always included in any trip I do. We packed enough warm clothing but in retrospect we didn't



Michelle van Niekerk and Sheleph Burger just before embarkation

Sheleph Burger

Some eager BLNG club members who Flocked to Marion



Sheleph Burger



Sheleph Burger



BLSA - Andy Wasung



BLSA - Andy Wasung

Left: Sheleph and Louis Burger at the Bird Party
Top right: A team of over 40 expert seabird and cetacean guides were on board and offered lectures and workshops during the cruise.
Bottom right: Eight BLSA Community Guides were sponsored by members to experience this birding trip of a lifetime.

need as much warm clothing as the weather was quite comfortable.'

Flockers also enjoyed the social side of the ship – the dining, shows and music.

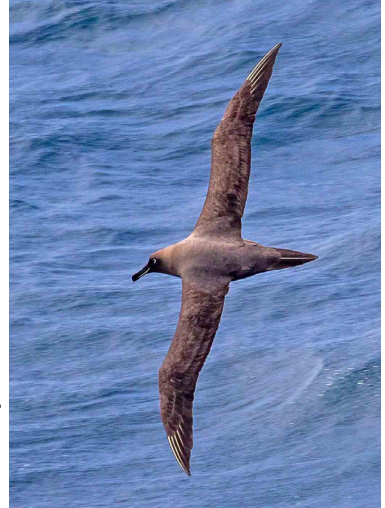
Most Flockers also packed a costume of sorts for the 'Bird Party' fancy dress occasion. Some of the spouses who went along who were not keen birders, were dumb struck by the level of enthusiasm of the birding community.

What an experience these Community guides could share with fellow Flockers! Because, apart from the more than 50 species of seabirds seen, this unique voyage with other passionate birders was a life-changing, emotional experience which brought many to tears.

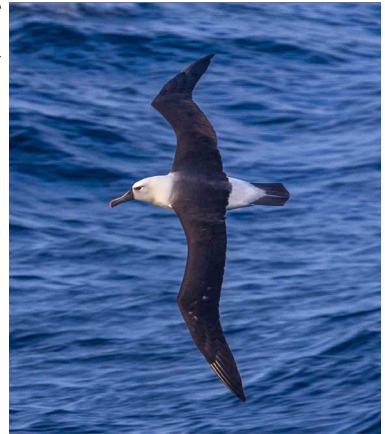
One keen BLNG member commented: 'Sea

birding is quite new to me and most of the birds seen, were added to my life list. All the albatrosses in particular were magnificent and very special to see. It was also interesting to see how all the seabirds of the ocean are adapted to live in these conditions. I added in the order of 30+ new lifers to my list.'

Where Wandering Albatrosses are only rarely encountered on pelagic day trips from Cape Town, they were present in good numbers just off Prince Edward and Marion Islands. These birds reportedly may live more than 60 years and in the roughly 10 years to reach maturity, each shows a slightly different form of plumage and the 'clown face' and 'monkey suit' of the first stage fully fledged form was quite interesting to spot.



All photos in group: Hannes van den Berg



Top left: Birders on deck of the MSM Orchestra

Middle left: Sub-adult Wandering Albatross

Bottom left: Southern Giant Petrel

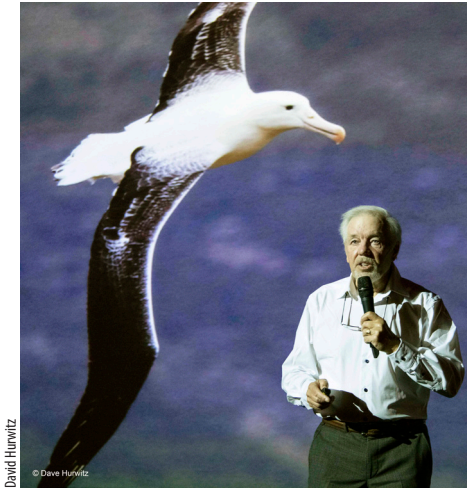
Top right: Sooty Albatross

Bottom right: Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross

To have the expertise of the likes of Peter Ryan and other specialist guides on deck besides us on The Wednesday which is now becoming known as Prion Wednesday, was invaluable and an absolute privilege.

Not that spotting or identifying seabird species was easy. One of the BLNG Flockers said, and perhaps expressed many similar experiences of fellow passengers:

'I saw 15 new species (most around Prince Edward Island) BUT dipped on a few specials like Blue Petrel – there were 100's or 1000's of small prion-like birds around and if you hear "Blue Petrel 200 meters" there was just no way I could pick it up. There are a lot of fantastic photos going around to prove they



David Hurwitz
© Dave Hurwitz

Above: During an amazing Peter Harrison lecture [With permission of David Hurwitz]

Right: THE sighting of the cruise – Tristan Albatross

were there, but I just could not get bins on a few of these very very special birds.'

For those who wanted to take a break from birding on the decks, the four daily lectures available on board were simply phenomenal. What an amazing experience it was to listen to Peter Harrison on his Apex Expeditions! He is known as the 'David Attenborough of the Seas'.

One birder commented: *'The lectures were great. Valuable and interesting information was imparted by knowledgeable speakers. I attended many of the lectures but the birder in me also wanted to be on the deck not to miss out on all the birds being seen.'*

And the high point of the voyage? Most birders agreed: *"Albatross Thursday, near Prince Edward Islands! It was amazing to have so many birds around that Wandering Albatross become a common sight. The guides were phenomenal – it was a privilege to bird alongside some of the world's best seabird experts.'* Birders who were alongside Peter Harrison mentioned that they



Roger MacDonald 3

felt extremely fortunate when he called the Tristan Albatross.

After a too-short time near Prince Edward Island due to the threatening storm and huge swells settling over Marion Island, the captain had to turn north and we sailed home with a fresh wind blowing in our necks.

Many Flockers are even now still suffering of withdrawal symptoms, reminisce with fellow-Flockers, and regularly go through their photographs, posting them online on the Flock to Marion 2022 fb-page to confirm their identifications. *'A prion- but which one?'* is one question which comes up in several different variations.

The final species list published by BLSA, compiled of all sightings, tallied at 59 species. This included 11 species of Albatross with Wandering Albatross the most numerous and Tristan Albatross THE bird of the voyage: 8 species of petrel, 7 species of Shearwaters, 3 species of jaegers, and 5 species of penguins. The King Penguin was a firm favourite, but the fast-swimming pods of Macaroni Penguins alongside



Sheleph Burger

President of BLNG, André Marx, on deck near Prince Edward Island



sanap.ac.za – Fitzpatrick Institute – The Mouse-Free Marion Project, July 5, 2021

Grey-headed Albatross chick

ship were striking, to say the least. Shore birds including cormorants and gulls were 17 species seen. Other notable sightings included dolphins, whales, seals, turtles and manta ray.

Why Flock to Marion Island?

‘Marion Island is in trouble, as are the nearly quarter of a million endangered seabirds that breed there.’

The House Mouse was accidentally brought to Marion Island by sealers in the early 1800s and bred successfully. To control this pest, cats were brought to the island but by the 1970s feral cats were killing up to half a million birds per year. South Africa successfully eradicated the cats in 1991. Unfortunately, mice thrived in the two decades since, and due to habitat changes on Marion and resulting food shortages, they turned to prey upon seabird chicks. ‘Scalplings’ and attacks on adult birds were recorded the

past two years. These birds are dying slow and agonising deaths, and entire populations of seabirds could be lost.

The MFM (Mouse-free Marion) Project will make use of aerial spreading of bait containing a targeted poison. Bait pellets will be sown by buckets slung underneath helicopters. The pellets are not water soluble and as such will not cause long-term damage. <https://mouse-freemarion.org>

‘It has been determined that winter (April/ May – August/September) is the optimal period in which to implement an eradication operation. This is the non-breeding period for mice at Marion, when their population size is low and natural food resources are minimal, rendering bait more attractive. A winter-baiting operation also reduces the risks to non-target seabird species on the island, as many are not resident on the island during the winter months.’ To review and update the Project and Operational Plans, a Project Manager, Dr. Anton Wolfaardt, and an



Jubilant birders celebrate the R3 million raised towards the Mouse-Free Marion Project by Flock to Marion

Operations Manager, Mr Keith Springer, have been appointed. [Carol Jacobs - South African National Antarctic Programme – The Mouse-Free Marion Project, July 5, 2021, <https://www.sanap.ac.za>

The bait required to cover the island will alone cost upwards of R30 million. Thus, at the end of the journey, jubilant Flock to Marion Birders gathered on the MSC Orchestra's pool deck to celebrate their sponsoring over 2200 hectares (R3 million +) on Marion towards the Mouse-Free Marion drive. Auctions at lectures, becoming a BirdLife Custodian, sponsoring a Hectare of Marion Island, Silent Auction, competitions and generous donations raised this amount.

Many thanks to:

- BirdLife South Africa, <https://www.birdlife.org.za/flock-to-marion-2022>
- The Mouse-Free Marion Project, <https://mousefreemarion.org>
- South African National Antarctic Programme – The Mouse-Free Marion Project, July 5, 2021, <https://www.sanap.ac.za/the-mouse-free-marion-project>
- Andy Wassung at BLSA for making available photographs
- BLNG-Flock-goers who shared their experiences and photographs 📷

Qôdesh kamp

L'aura Jordaan

Die nuwejaarboodskappe is nog vars op my W'app en die prentjies lyk een vroliker as die ander.

Voorbereiding vir die terug-kantoor toe maak my dae kort. Die (nat) somertuin verg baie aandag en die voëls se nesmaak en afbreek (daai vink!) en kleintjies verskaf my baie pret. Lank geluister om die klein lysters te vind tussen al die nuwe mossies, glasogies,

janfrederikke en muisvoëls. Selfs die kraai kom sit en koggel in die boom. Die vreemde gesang vat toe lank om te vind: ja dis 'n ontsnapte kokketiel, spierwit en astrant. Vroegaand is die paparazzi in die tuin langsaan bedrywig toe die jong grootooruil op die kaal palmboom kom sit. Dan kom die W'app-groepie-lys vir Qôdesh en ek moet haastig gaan om my ou tent te gaan uithaal.

Zusterstroom-
pad



Johan Filiri

Vrydagmiddag draai my Jazz se neus suid. Rigting Bronkhorstspuit. Die pad is druk besig en plek-plek kom die reën in buitjies af. Maar dan is daar 'n vol reënboog wat ek by 'n stop vinnig deur die nat ruit kon afneem – vir onthou, dis so mooi. Die Zusterstroompas is nogal stil met net 'n Tiptol en Swartkopwielewaal wat durf sing so tussen die druppels deur.

By die kamp kom maak Keanu die hek oop en ek ry groot-oog verby die 2017 hoogwatermerk. Ja-nee, ons slaan weer kamp op hoog by die ablusies. Eers af om die riviervlak te merk, sodat ek môreoggend kan sien of dit gesak het. Die eiland is omtrent verspoel en die water kom met 'n spoed verby gerammel. 'n Kontras

met die bleek stroompie wat ek ken.

Met my ou tent moes ek die manne vra om te help opslaan, voor ons die omgewing kan begin verken. (Thanks to Johan, Keanu and his father).

Ons stap rond en kry Pylvlekkatlagter, Grootstreepswaels, Hadede en die vlieëvanger.

Die vlam van die eerste vuur roep almal saam vir aandete. Ons geniet die heerlike vars lug en samesyn soos elkeen sy ete kom geniet. Die vuurvliegies maak wel hul verskyning maar baie minder as vorige kere. 'n Rivierpadda en 'n klein driehoekige enetjie ook. Van ver kom die Afrikaanse Naguil se kloostersang.

Ons spreek af om 6 vm by die hek te wees, sodat ons vroeg deur Hepzibah kan loop. Eerste

Die rivier en
kamp



Johan Filiri



Rivierkruising

stop kry ons wewers en 'n enkele Witooievaar. Opgewonde uitroepe rits die spesies af soos ons in die hek al begin merk. Kleinstreepswael, Bosveldvisvanger, duiwe, Diederik, en Bruinsylangstertjies met die Witborsspreus wat almal bekoor. Die Rooibekkekelaars wei luidrugtig in die bome, met die Goudstertspieg en Drongo wat die koor in *a capella* afwissel. 'n Vinnige flits van roesbruin laat die verkykers vinnig rondswaai om die Paradysvlieëvanger te vind.

Soos ons aanstap tussen die huise deur kan ons nie die Rooivlerkspreus, Grootringduiwe, Swartkroontjagra en Glasogies mis nie. Met die Rooikophoutkapper in die agtergrond, die Witpensuikerbekkie wat vrolik oor ons koppe vlieg en 'n skramse kyk na die Dassievoël kom ons by die eerste stroompie. Marna ken van, en trek tekkies uit om met droë tekkies te kan verder stap, waar ek so lekker diep in die stroom trap met my sagte tekkies en heelpad myself skop oor die waterstewels nog in die kar is. ...

Daar was drie plekke waar ons so deur die water moes loop sodat ons bo by die waterval kan kom. Ivonne hou die lug dop vir die verskyning van die arende, wat toe elders was.

So roep die Bandkeelkleinjantjie en Geelblestinker verder aan, en die Swartkatakoeoe tjirp kort-kort sy deuntjie in. Nog 'n keer kom die Witborsspreus verby om ons aan die glimlag te hou.

Keanu se skerp ogies merk die Blougrysvlieëvanger waar dit so stil in die middel van die boom op sy tak sit en wag vir die kos om

aangevlieg te kom. Geduldig verduidelik hy vir elkeen waar om te kyk sodat almal hierdie goed gekamoeleerde klein verebondel kan raaksien. 'n Eerste vir baie. Kyk vir die wit in die stert wanneer hy vlieg. Maar sy verduideliking word gou kortgeknip deur die sagte deuntjie van die Groenvlekduifie. Dit word onderbreek met die helder sang van die Grasvoël en almal skarrel vir 'n beter kyk na die outjie. Insteede daarvan sien ons die Rooikeelflap en 'n Klipstreepkoppe, onderbreek deur die luide Diederik-geroep. Soos ons aanstap klink die Natalse Fisant oorkant die rivier duidelik op met die geroep van die Kleinheuningwyser wat almal se aandag aftrek. Party kry 'n vinnige kyk na die Rooibeksysties.

By die waterval self kon ons net die natuurskoon bewonder en sug dat ons dit nie kan inpak en in ons tuin kan neersit nie. So stap ons terug met die voorstes wat 'n Swartspewer sien land in die boom, en woens verduidelik ~ van daar af na daar, net na die skadustreep. Mooi, maar vir my om op daardie afstand te kan identifiseer, nee, moet mis, want ek kon nie met sekerheid sê wat ek sien nie. (Ek merk net wat ek sien).

Daar gelaat, stap ons voort tot die uitroep kom vir die Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie, gelukkig en geïnspireerd stap ons terug met die vooruitsig van die spesiale eetgoed wat vir ons wag. Hoog hoor ons weer die gewone Swartmese roep met sowaar 'n visarend wat granietstil op die dooie tak sit en sonvang.

Die groep kan net nie stil raak nie en word onderbreek met die roep van die Grootheuningwyser se *Victor victor victor*.

Terug by die kamp wil party slaap opvang maar ek kies koers rivier toe om my watermerk te gaan meet, wat toe wel 'n goeie 10 cm gesak het. Ek merk 'n beweging en gaan kyk hoe 'n arend oorvlieg en hardloop om Johan te gaan roep vir 'n foto van die Langkuifarend wat mooi oor my kop draai en oop in die boom oorkant die kampie gaan sit.

Na die hitte van die dag oorgeskuif het, begin ons uitrusty na Renosterkop, lekker 5-ster in Johan se Caravelle. Die grasveldspesies en sowaar, 'n Edelvalk, hou ons besig tot ons bo stop.



Johan Fährri

Renosterkop

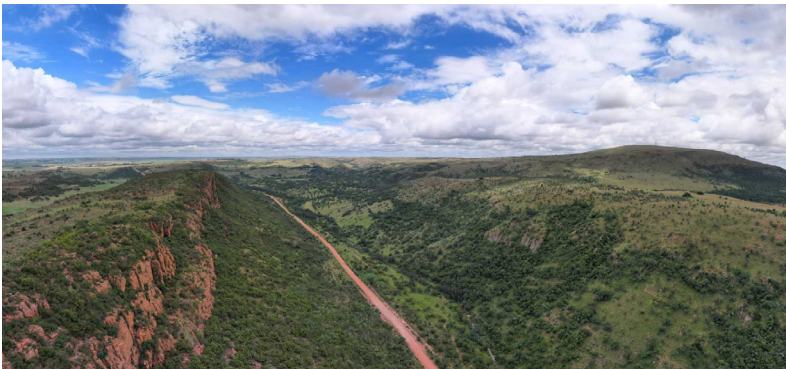
Johan merk eerste die arend heel bo-op die hoogste toring, met sy scope kan ons bevestig dit is die Bruinslangarend. Sy rus word versteur toe 'n Witborskraai hom begin treiter as ongenooide gas in sy gebied. Hy sit egter ongehinderd. Ons stap om die heining en raak besig met die talle klein veldblommetjies, onderbreek deur die roep van Klipstreepkoppie, duive en 'n Kleinglansspreeu. Met die afry kry ons 'n paar Oostelike Rooipootvalkies en 'n Kransvalk. Ons wonder oor die vele roepe wat kort opmekaar van dieselfde plek af kom, so dit kan net die Spotlewerik wees.

Met die skemer wat vinnig naderkom, gaan ons terug vir 'n lekker braai waar almal uithang met al die lekker bykosse, gesellig onder die sterre. Ons spreek af dat die wat vroeg die

volgende oggend wil huis toe ry, kan gaan, maar ek, Ivonne en Marna besluit om nog eers weer dagbreekvoëls te gaan soek. Ons stop eers voor die brug en kyk rond vir enige watervoëls, maar die rivier is baie vol en vinnig. Skaars begin ry toe die voorstes uitroep (histeries) vir die Watertrapper wat vinnig oor die pad draf-fladder. Ons wag 'n rukkie maar sy is in die ruigtes in. Ons stop en kry nog 'n klomp nuwes vir die lys voor ons besluit die tente is droog genoeg om op te pak.

Oppad terug merk ek nog die Europese Byvreters, Piet-my-vrou, Swartkoekoek, Bruinkopvisvanger, Oranjeborsboslaksman, Sneebal en die Rooineklewerik.

Fluit fluit my storie is uit! 🦉



Johan Fährri

Die terugpad
- Zusterstroom

Mooikloof Estate Outing – 19 January 2022

Keanu Canto

Early on an overcast morning, 12 keen birders met up at Sheleph's house in Mooikloof Estate on the outskirts of Pretoria. Not long after leaving her property, we were treated to a quartet of species from the bushshrike family. Firstly, a Southern Boubou called in the distance, and shortly thereafter a Bokmakierie joined the chorus. We quickly got eyes on the Bokmakierie, but it disappeared in a flash – luckily, we relocated it on the lawn in front of us where it allowed for some lovely views. Next the distinctive song of an Orange-breasted Bushshrike caught our attention, but almost immediately a Black-backed Puffback called on the other side of the road. It was hard to know where to look! After a while of searching through the trees everyone managed to get onto the Orange-breasted Bushshrike, as well as a lovely African Paradise Flycatcher.

After the bushshrike bonanza, we pushed on, and were treated to close-up views of a Groundscraper Thrush flying up onto a telephone wire (interestingly they are the only local thrush that likes to regularly perch on wires) and a few Spotted Thick-knees. A Rosy-faced Lovebird, of Pretoria's feral population, landed on a nearby tree and we were treated



Keanu Canto

Cape Weaver/Kaapse wewer

to the antics of a couple of weaver species – a Southern Masked Weaver chasing off a Diederik Cuckoo, Thick-billed Weavers nest-building in bamboo and a male Cape Weaver nesting over a small pond. The rain then came down in buckets and the group took cover under a driveway entrance.

Once the rain let up a little, we drove down to Mooikloof's dam along the Zwavelpoort Spruit, and here we found Yellow-billed and White-faced Ducks, Little Rush Warbler, Village Weaver, Common Waxbill and Black Crake amongst others. A slippery, muddy walk along the spruit revealed Brown-hooded Kingfisher, multiple Willow Warblers and three different male Lesser Honeyguides calling from their territories spaced out in the forest of alien trees lining the river. A Common Buzzard caught our attention as it flew through the dense trees, and a pair of African Black Ducks and a female Pin-tailed Whydah at the main dam when we arrived back put us on a decent 68 species for a drizzly morning. 🐦



Keanu Canto

*Orange-breasted Bushshrike/
Oranjeborsboslaksman*

Colbyn Wetland Birding with Philip Calinikos 5 February 2022

I. Müller

Wet, wet, wet, everywhere was wet! It had been raining for 3 days in a row, with about 180 mm measured between 15:00 and 16:00 on Friday afternoon, almost double the total average amount of the whole of February. It kept on raining right through the night and still at 6 o'clock. Calling the walk off was the only sensible thing to do. But then the weather cleared, and a few 'die-hards' followed Philip in gum boots. True to the Wetland's name there was water, water everywhere. The birds came alive, and we enjoyed some good sightings. The European Honey Buzzard in the sky above was a new addition to the Colbyn list and caused a lot of excitement. Whydahs and Bishops hovered just above the tall grass. Some Swifts and Swallows were sailing by as the Little Rush Warbler called in the reeds. There was plenty to see and hear in this vibrant lush habitat. As we were leaving a Great Reed Warbler raised his voice just once – was it for real?

The Colbyn Wetlands remain a birding hotspot in the heart of Pretoria!



Philip Calinikos surveys a flooded crossing



Rubber boots were essential

Wolfhuiskraal Sleepover –

Pieter Heslinga



Malachite Kingfisher - Kuifkopvisvanger



Black-winged Kite - Blouvalk



Juvenile Lesser Moorhen - Jongeling Kleinwaterhoender



Village Indigobird - Staalblouvinkie



Zitting Cisticola - Landeryklopkloppie



Amur Falcon - Oostelike Rooipootvalk

– Photo Report 1-2 March

en Willie Victor



Black-winged Pratincole - Swartvlerksprinkaanvoël



Little Egret - Kleinwitreier



Dwarf Bittern - Dwergrietreier



Pale Chanting Goshawk - Bleeksingvalk



Partially Leucistic Crowned Lapwing - Kroonkiewiet



Adult Lesser Moorhen - Volwasse Kleinwaterhoender

Austin Roberts Bird Sanctuary photographic competition – 5 March

Willie Victor

The Friends of Austin Roberts Bird Sanctuary (ARBS) and Birdlife Northern Gauteng (BLNG) organized a photographic competition to create awareness of the special behaviour displayed by some common birds in ARBS and to promote the sanctuary as a birding location.

The competition closed on 18th February 2022. Seventeen photographers entered approximately 440 images.

The organizers designated two independent judges, namely, Herman van der Walt and Alta Oosthuizen to assist with the adjudication.

Our winners are hereby announced.

Judges

Alta Oosthuizen

Herman van der Walt (AFIAP)

Our sponsors and prizes

First Prize:

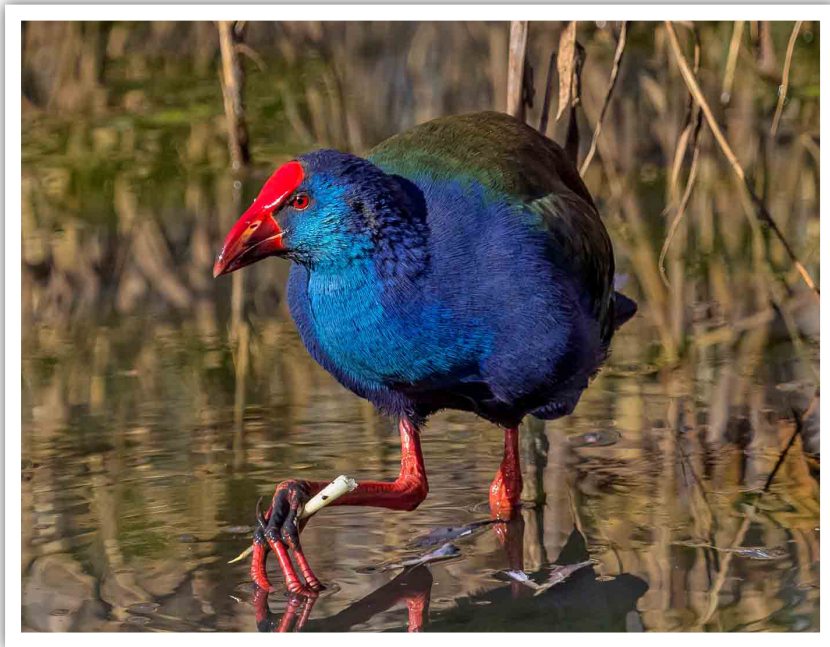
- Pretoria Art Gallery - Pieter van Heerden (R1,000) plus
- Blue Crane Restaurant (R1,000)

Second Prize:

- Body Stress Release - Mariama Barry Malumo (R1,470)

Third Prize:

- Brooklyn Mall (R1,000) 🦋



First Prize - African Swamphen/ Grootkoningriethaan by Hannes van den Berg



Second Prize – Little Egret / Kleinwitreier by Antoinette Oelofsen



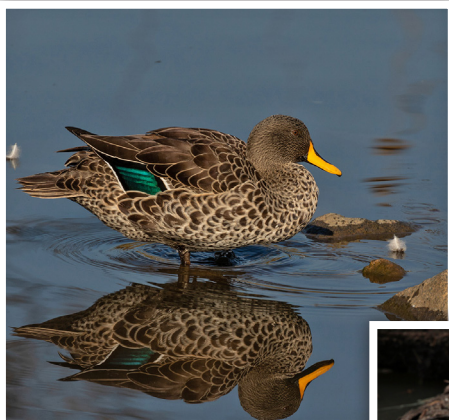
Honourable Mention – Sacred Ibis / Skoorsteenveër by Paul le Roux



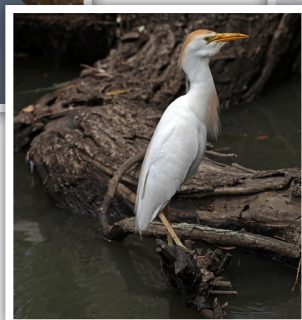
Third Prize – Grey Crowned Crane / Mahem by David Roberts



Honourable Mention – Tawny-Flanked Prinia / Bruinsylangstertjie by Nicole Wreyford



Honourable Mention – Yellow-Billed Duck / Geelbekeend by Antoinette Oelofsen



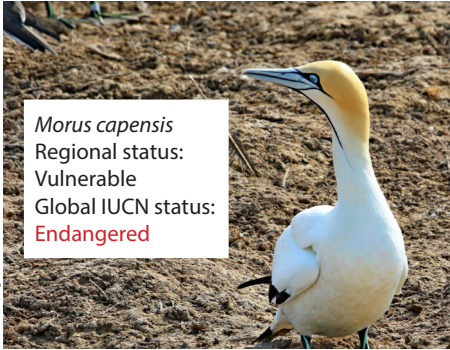
Honourable Mention – Western Cattle Egret / Veeerier by Paul le Roux



Honourable Mention – Black Heron/ Swartreier by Hannes van den Berg

BLSA Bird of the year 2022 – The Cape Gannet

Compiled by Ivonne Coetzee



Morus capensis
Regional status:
Vulnerable
Global IUCN status:
Endangered

Pieter Heeding

Cape Gannet with its exquisite facial patterning and colouring

Gannet facts

The Cape Gannet is an endemic coastal seabird, found only in South Africa and Namibia. Their flamboyant painted faces with cobalt eye-ring, black markings, yellow and white plumage, acrobatics and missile-like diving style make these birds as magnificent as they are striking.

Gannets are formidable high-velocity diving birds. Their prime feed source includes sardine and anchovy; small schooling fish which form the basis of the food chain.

‘To compete with the many other seabirds, fish and mammals that also chase after these fish, they plunge-dive to depths of over 20 metres. To do this they hover some 30 metres up in the air, spot a fish, and plummet headfirst towards it. They may reach speeds of up to 100 km per hour by streamlining their body, extending their wings backwards before literally cutting the water surface with their sharp beaks. Gannets can hit the water at such speed due to air sacs in their face and chest which act like an

air bag, cushioning the impact with the water. Their eyes are positioned quite far backward giving them binocular vision, which allows them to judge distances accurately. They also have no external nostrils, so during a deep dive water will not be forced in.’ [Tegan Carpenter-Kling: *The Cape Gannet: the perfectly adapted plunge diver – experiment*]



R. Cojym

Immature Cape Gannet torpedoing into the water



Swimming to the surface

R. Cojym

Their large webbed feet assist in swimming speedily after fleeing fish. Since they are social foragers, they do sometimes collide in mid-air and to prevent other gannets robbing them of their catch, swallow fish underwater while swimming to the surface.

They gather in their thousands to follow the annual sardine run up the KwaZulu-Natal coast when the sight of great numbers of gannets torpedoing into the ocean, eager to feast on this annual pilchard party, adds to this magnificent spectacle.

Ritualised greeting ceremony

The ritualised greeting ceremonies may well have earned the Cape Gannet their Afrikaans name, *Malgas*, which is thought to derive from the words 'mal gans' (mad goose).

Threats

The Cape Gannet is an excellent ambassador to highlight two of the most pressing conservation issues facing South Africa's seabirds. Cape Gannets breed on only six islands across South Africa and Namibia. The Gannet is an endangered bird, with their population having decreased with 50% in the last 60 years. Cape Gannets are threatened by the lack of sardine and anchovy due to the combination of a shift in the distribution of the fish populations and competition with one of the most important commercial fisheries in South Africa. To compensate, gannets often resort to feeding on hake discards thrown off the back of trawlers. This is however a double-edged sword; they are vulnerable to becoming tangled in the fishing nets and, while the discards are enough to support the feeding requirements of adults, the lower fat content of hake is not sufficient to raise healthy chicks. [Birdlife.org.za/bird-of-the-year-2022]

Gannets are also threatened by feeding seals, leading to abandonment of some breeding colonies where seal predation was ferocious. Other threats are oil spills, disease which might spread fast in Gannet colonies,



Pieter Heesters

Cape Gannets perform a ritualised dance during their elaborate greeting ceremonies when one of a pair returns from a foraging sortie. Males and females call ecstatically.



Pieter Heesters

After the calling ritual, they 'fence' their bills by pointing them upwards



Pieter Heesters

After 'fencing' they bow to each other and entwine their necks. This is an essential ritual which strengthens their pairing, in turn making for the successful rearing of chicks.

Peter Heulings



Cape Gannet Colony where their preference for huddling together may well assist in the spreading of disease

heat waves and violent storms which may wash nests with eggs or chicks out to sea. Pelicans also pose a threat as they feed on Gannet chicks.

Conservation measures

Interventions by BLSA’s Albatross Task Force saw the introduction of bird-scaring lines that deter birds from entering the hazardous areas behind boats. These have reduced the risk of seabird bycatch by up to 95%. This best-practice by-catch mitigation has proved to be a supremely successful conservation method. Other methods include marine spatial planning near Bird Island in Algoa Bay, where 70% of Cape Gannets breed, resulting in a restricted-use area which reduces fisheries competition for resources. BLSA and scientists

implement standard protocols to reduce the possibility of pathogens spreading amongst gannets. Another conservation strategy is to ‘remove’ problematic seals. [Birdlife.org.za/bird-of-the-year-2022]

The Bird of the Year initiating aims to raise the profile and understanding of endangered birds and thus ultimately contribute to its conservation efforts.

Sources

- <https://www.birdlife.org.za/bird-of-the-year-2022>
- EXPERIMENT - Tegan Carpenter-Kling: The Cape Gannet: the perfectly adapted plunge diver
- Conservation Conversations: Christina Hagen: Cape Gannet – Bird of the year 2022

DONATIONS

A sincere thank you for your generous donations. Your contributions help us to support bird conservation projects, and are greatly appreciated.
Ons opregte dank vir u donasie. U skenkings verseker dat ons 'n groter bydrae tot die bewaring van voëls kan lewer. Ons waardeer dit opreg.

- Ryan Blumenthal (January 2022)
- André Marx (December 2021)
- Kurt Zsilavec (November 2021)

Conservation in the Karoo

Ivonne Coetzee, *Laniarius* Editor, spoke with two interns from Spain during mid-February about their research work in the Karoo

I first read about you both on Facebook in BDI Citizen Science, and it is exciting to meet you in person in the Khoisan Karoo Conservancy. Tell us a bit about yourselves.

We are Josu Meléndez and Jon Blanco, and we come from the Basque Country, in the north of Spain. We studied together at the University of the Basque Country, graduating in Biology. Jon studied an MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation of Tropical Areas, taking him to Costa Rica, while I studied an MSc in Marine Environment and Resources at several European universities. After finishing our respective master degrees, we were granted a “Global Training Scholarship” by the Basque Government, which enabled us to join the Biodiversity and Development Institute (BDI), based in Cape Town.

How long will you be in South Africa?

Jon arrived in South Africa at the end of November, and I arrived at the beginning of February. Our contracts with BDI are for 6 months. However, we are planning to stay longer because we would like to visit different

locations in the country, before going back to Spain.

What is the purpose of your visit?

Our goal is to collaborate with the Khoisan Karoo Conservancy. This conservancy is an initiative of its founder, PC Ferreira, who seeks to combine biodiversity conservation with sustainable livestock production. PC has been developing an ecotourism initiative for years, offering activities such as birding, kayaking, fishing, cultural tours – in which he shows petroglyphs and other historic remains of the Khoisan people – and the jewel in the crown, a night drive to spot the “Shy Five” – aardvark, aardwolf, porcupine, bat-eared fox and black-footed cat.

Our work here has two focuses: 1) the monitoring of species, and 2) the involvement of guests in small nature activities. An example of species monitoring is doing weekly counts on New Holme to keep track of the abundance and diversity of waterbird species, to learn about their dynamics and seasonal patterns. Within the activities that we are developing



Jon Blanco

Jon and Josu busy with bird counts at Khoisan Gariep Nature Reserve

to involve guests in data collection processes are birding and landscape photography.

What does your programme here in SA look like? (How long will you stay at each location, what will your specific focus/purpose be in each of these areas?)

Jon spent the first two months of his stay in Cape Town, where he collaborated in the monitoring of breeding African Oystercatchers in Robben Island. However, the monitoring in Robben Island is not over yet. After a big storm in January destroyed many Oystercatcher nests, many pairs have nested again and the breeding period has now been extended. Josu will have to go down to Cape Town for a period in March to help with the last part of the monitoring. In the next few months, we will be working on the monitoring projects here in the Karoo, but after that we might have other new projects around Cape Town. We are hoping that after our stay in the Karoo, we will be able to get some experience with marine research projects, especially related to seabirds. This is particularly valuable for my work, as it is directly connected to my background.

Who co-ordinates this work?

This work is co-ordinated by Les Underhill, former professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at University of Cape Town. Nowadays he continues working as a Senior Research Scholar, supervising postgraduate students, and he is the director of the BDI.

What do you hope to contribute to conservation in South Africa?

We hope that the projects that we started will enable us to better understand the dynamics and patterns of biodiversity in the Karoo, and use this information to improve management and conservation decisions in the region. Furthermore, we expect that other young students will join the Karoo Research Centre in the future, giving continuity to the projects that we started in this under-studied area.

What can you tell us about the conservation work in the Khoisan Karoo Conservancy?

The Khoisan Karoo Conservancy seeks to harmonise biodiversity conservation with low-impact ranching, which is necessary to ensure the country's food security. The property has more than 8 000 hectares of land with low levels of disturbance, allowing the coexistence of people, fauna and livestock.

The project has various ecotourism activities for the enjoyment and consciousness-raising of its visitors. There are also reintroductions of species that once inhabited this region but were exterminated, such as the hippopotamus and the buffalo, and in the short term, the critically endangered black rhino.

But that's not all. PC, the manager of the conservancy, is well aware of the socio-economic reality that exists in the region, and is currently promoting a project that aims to restore historical memory to the Karretjie People, the original inhabitants of the region, who have come to occupy the lowest link in society. Through structured interviews with these people and bibliographical research, this project will seek to better understand the origins of this forgotten community, while raising awareness of the high vulnerability of their current situation.

What have you experienced here?

In the Karoo Gariep Nature Reserve, we have experienced a sense of wilderness and authenticity that is hard to find in Europe. We have been impressed by the great love shown by the people who live here towards nature, and their respectful way of coexisting with it and its resources. What is more, we have been flattered by the great interest of both workers and guests in the activities we are developing, and in our culture. And we cannot forget the immense hospitality with which we have been treated at all times. In summary, this is a remarkable place to visit due to its biological and historical value, and we believe it is the perfect spot for nature lovers and birders travelling around South Africa.

How will you be able to contribute to this work?

We are designing and testing the preliminary protocols that the new students who will follow us will use and improve. For this, we must learn the singularities of this ecosystem and transfer them into roadmaps that allow the collection of quality biological information.

Tell me about your impressions of South Africa.

We are aware of the pain and suffering that South Africans have gone through, and are going through. That is why we have been happy to see the positive attitude of the people in terms of being aware of the past and making an effort to promote a society that is committed to harmony between cultures. We believe this is the reason why we felt so included and embraced from the first moment, despite coming from such a distant country.

As for its nature, what else can we say about the biodiversity "hotspot" that is South Africa? Working in this environment is the dream of many biologists, and in our case it has come true. We are delighted every time we spot a new species for us, and so far, this happens almost every day!

Do you have any dream destination(s) that you would like to visit in South Africa?

No one will be surprised if we say that we want to visit Kruger National Park, but we have other wildlife conservation parks in our bucket list like Addo and Karoo National Parks. We would also love to do a road trip along the Garden Route (we have heard so much about it) and visit other provinces like Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

What are your plans for your future careers?

Jon: I will look for similar opportunities that allow me to get involved in projects with fieldwork. I have special affection for ornithology and herpetology, although my interests extend to other animal groups as well. Wherever I end up, I hope to contribute what I know, while I continue learning.

Josu: I am seeking to get involved in marine environment research and consultancy. Particularly, I would like to study the interaction between fisheries and seabirds. Thus, I do not discard the possibility of doing a PhD in the near future. In the meantime, I will try to get as much experience as possible from opportunities like this. 🐦

BLGN-ringershoekie 2022 (1)

Moreleta NR, 6 November 2021 (olv Mari Ueckermann)

Sewe A-ringers en drie C-ringers het hierdie ringsessie by hierdie gewilde natuureservaat bygewoon. Dit was Mijke Muller se eerste keer. Haar pa, Kobus, wat haar gebring het, was so gefassineer deur die voëlringery dat hy sommer daar en dan besluit het om ook te ring. Vier persone van die publiek het kom kyk wat ons doen, asook twee Unisa-studente.

Die vangste was redelik—ons het 193 voëls hanteer, waarvan 21 verskillende spesies. Die hervangste was vyftien, wat 7,8% is.

Die Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked Weavers) het die eerste prys gevat met 126 voëls. Tweede was die Rooivinke (Southern Red Bishop) met elf voëls en die Dikbekwevers (Thick-billed Weaver) was derde met net ses in getal. Ander oulike spesies was: Diederikkie (Dideric Cuckoo), Rooibekakelaar (Green Wood-hoopoe), Goudstertspieg (Golden-tailed Woodpecker), Kleinrietsanger (African Reed-Warbler), Kaapse Vleisanger (Little Rush-Warbler), Rooivlerktjagra (Brown-crowned Tchagra), Bandkeelvink (Cut-throat Finch) en Streepkopkanarie (Streak-headed Seedeater).



Wanda wys vir Lucia Lotter hoe om haar nette te herstel

Bushtrails, Magaliesburg, 19 tot 21 November 2021 (olv Elba Swart en Arrie Klopper)

Ses A-ringers en een C-ringer het hierdie naweek meegemaak. Die C-ringer, Pieter du Plessis, het by Bushtrails gekwalifiseer as A-ringer, met 500 voëls gering, en meer as 50 spesies. Liz en Bert (die eienaars) het soos gewoonlik ons vriendelik ontvang en tuis laat voel. Bert is 'n toeroperateur en die vier Nederlandse dames wat toe net van 'n toer af teruggekom het, het met groot belangstelling die voëlringery gadeslaan.

Ons het 138 voëls hanteer, waarvan 18 verskillende spesies en 28 hervangste (20,3%). Dit is baie hoog, want Elba neem dikwels ringers na hierdie plaas toe. Die spesie wat die meeste gevang is, was die Rooibekkeleas (Red-billed Quelea) (47) en tweede meeste, Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked-Weaver) (25). Ander spesies was: Kardinaalspeg (Cardinal Woodpecker), Paradys- en Swartvlieëvanger (African Paradise- and Southern Black-Flycatcher), Witliesbosbontrokkie (Chin-spot Batis) en Koningrooibekkie (Pin-tailed Whydah).

Skova Biodiversity Rehab Centre, Hazyview, 7 Desember 2021 (Frik, Wanda en Mari)

Vroeg in Desember het Lianda Naude van hierdie rehab-sentrum weer gebel om die uile wat sy wil loslaat, te kom ring. Daar was drie Gevlekte Ooruile (Spotted Eagle-Owl), vier



Pieter du Plessis staan met sy 500ste voël in sy hand. Sy vrou, Poala is baie trots op haar man wat by hierdie sessie as A-ringer gekwalifiseer het.



Bushtrails: Pieter du Plessis met die drie eksaminatore wat sy finale evaluering gedoen het met hulle gades. Vlnr Frik du Plooy, Arrie Klopper, Pieter (middel), Chris Bothma en Jan Beukes.

Nonnetjie-Uile (Barn Owl) en Wanda was so gelukkig om 'n Bosuil (Wood Owl) te ring. Met 'n oorslaap op Dullstream het ons drie die geleentheid aangegryp om van hierdie formidabele



By Skova Biodiversity Rehab het Chris du Plooy hierdie Nonnetjiesuil gering. Die eienaar, Lianda Naude en Wanda Louwrens was ook by.

roofvoëls te ring. Dit was 'n wonderlike ervaring om sulke voëls in die hand te hou.

Wolfhuiskraal, Pienaarsrivier, 10 tot 12 Desember 2021 (olv Wanda Louwrens)

Sewe A-ringers het die naweek in 'n lower-groen Bosveld deurgebring. Dit was op ons gereelde plekke so nat, dat ons net om die huis kon ring. Ons het geen toegang tot die rivier gehad nie. Sondag en -oggend het dit gereën, sodat die groep maar vroeg opgepak het. Ons het Saterdag nogtans 83 voëls hanteer, waarvan 27 verskillende spesies. Die hervangpersentasie was ook hoog—27,7% met die 23 voëls wat ons weer gevang het. Dit was die derde keer in 2021 wat ons daar gering het. Maar nie net die BLGN-ringers vang daar voëls nie. Ons kry dikwels hervangste van ander ringers. Die Blousysies (Blue Waxbill) het die koek gevat met 14 individue, gevolg deur die Hofangers (Willow Warbler) met 8 voëls. Ander goeie spesies was: Klipstreepkoppie (Cinnamon-breasted Bunting), Europese en Maricovlieëvanger (Spotted and Marico Flycatcher), Vlei- en Gebande Sanger (Marsh and Barred Wren-Warbler), Bruinkeelsanger (Burnt-necked Eremomela), Bosveldfisant (Swainson's Spurfowl) en Bonthoutkapper (Acacia Pied Barbet).

Bushtrails, Magaliesburg, 10 tot 12 Desember 2021 (olv Elba Swart)

Net vier A-ringers het weer 'n keer na hierdie plaas anderkant Magaliesburg gery. Hulle het nogtans 71 voëls gekry by die huis, waarvan 25 spesies, met net een hervang. Die Klipstreepkoppie (Cinnamon-breasted Bunting) was die meeste. Ander besonderse spesies was: Blouvalkie (Black-winged Kite), Geelblestinker (Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird), Spotsanger (Icterine Warbler), Suidelike Waterfiskaal (Southern Boubou) en Bergkanarie (Black-throated Canary).

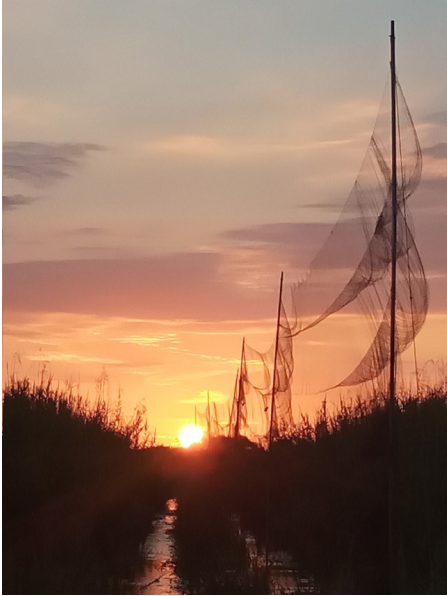
Die groepie het ook die berg aangedurf en 34 voëls daar gekry, waarvan agt verskillende spesies en twee voëls weer gevang is. Daar het die Vaalkoester (Buffy Pipit) koning gekraai met elf in getal, met die Oranjekeelkalkoentjie (Cape Longclaw) tweede met sewe voëls. Ander mooi spesies was: Donkerkoester (Plain-backed Pipit), Rooineklewerik (Rufous-naped Lark) en Kroonkiewiet (Crowned Lapwing).

Hans Hoheisen, naby Orpenhek, 3 tot 5 Januarie 2022 (olv Anita Michel)

Net drie A-ringers en een C-ringer het hierdie kamp naby die Wildtuin bygewoon. Die vangste was nie baie groot nie—net 52 voëls en nege hervangste is hanteer. Die Langstertlaksmanne (Magpie Shrike) was die meeste, naamlik ses voëls, asook ander spesies soos: Bosveldvisvanger (Woodland Kingfisher), Witkeelsanger (Common Whitethroat), Hofanger (Willow Warbler), Oranjeborsboslaksman (Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike), Grootglansspreeu (Burchell's Starling), Laeveldnaguil (Square-tailed Nightjar), Baardwipstert (Bearded Scrub-Robin), Swartkopwielewaal (Black-headed Oriole), Spookvoël (Grey-headed Bushshrike) en Groenvlekuif (Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove).

Nylsvley, Modimolle, 7 tot 9 Januarie 2022 (olv Johan de Jager)

Twaalf A-ringers en twee C-ringers het hierdie baie nat reservaat vroeg in die nuwe jaar besoek. Dit was so nat dat ons nie by ons



Nylsvley

gewone ringplekke kon uitkom nie. Ons het nogtans 142 voëls hanteer, waarvan 56 verskillende spesies—'n rekord tot op hede! Daar was sestien hervangste. Die oudste een was 'n Pylvekkatlagter (Arrow-marked Babbler) wat dr P van Eeden in 2013 by Nylsvley gering het (dit was ook die spesie waarvan die tweede meeste voëls gevang is). Die Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked-Weaver) het voorgeloopt met agtien voëls.

Ander mooi spesies was: Ses sangerspesies soos: Groot-, Kaapse en Kleinriet-, Europese Riet- en Vlei-, asook Gebande Sanger (Great Reed, Lesser Swamp, African Reed, Marsh, Sedge and Barred Wren-Warbler), Dwergrietreier (Dwarf Bittern), Swartkoekoek (Black Cuckoo) (wat vir Madeleen van Loggerenberg 'n "lifer" was), Bennetspeg (Bennett's Woodpecker), Rooiborsswael (Red-breasted Swallow), Geelborswillie (Yellow-bellied Greenbul), Grysrugkwêkwêvoël (Grey-backed Camaroptera) en Swartwangsysie (Black-faced Waxbill).



Paula Steyn

Foto 6- Anita Michel het 'n Spookvoël in Januarie by Hans Hoheisen gering. Dit was 'n lifer vir haar.

Moreleta NR, 22 Januarie 2022 (olv Hein Bantjes)

Twaalf A-ringers en een C-ringer het by hierdie gewilde natuurreservaat hulle nette gaan opslaan. Omdat die aandklokkeël opgehef is, kon ons al teen half vier by hierdie reservaat bymekaar kom. Die groep het in totaal 425 voëls hanteer, waarvan 45 (10.6%) "re-traps" was; die aantal spesies was 24. Voorwaar 'n besige oggend. Die grootste oes het uit Pieter du Plessis se nette gekom wat dapper genoeg was om sy nette oor die spruit op te slaan. Die Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked-Weaver) het die rekord oortref vir die jaar vir die meeste voëls—naamlik 274 individue. Tweede was die Dikbekwevers (Thick-billed Weaver) met 41 voëls.

Ander interessante spesies was: Hof-sanger (Willow Warbler), Grootrietsanger (Great Reed Warbler), Bontrugwewer (Village Weaver), Diederikkie (Dideric Cuckoo), Pylvekkatlagter (Arrow-marked Babbler) en Rooibekkelelaar

(Green Wood-hoopoe).

Daar het 'n paar interessante "re-traps" uitgekóm. Die "oudste" een was 'n Swartkeelgeelvink (Southern Masked-Weaver) wat op die 11de Februarie 2013 deur Gerrie Janse van Rensburg gering is en nou weer deur Lucia Lötter hanteer is, amper nege jaar later by dieselfde koördinate.

Die tweede "oudste" hervangs was ook 'n Swartkeelgeelvink (Southern Masked-Weaver) wat as 'n "juvenile" op die 5de Julie 2014 deur Vincent Ward gering is en nou weer gevang is deur Chris du Plooy by dieselfde koördinate, 7

jaar en ongeveer 6 maande later.

Voëls wat al die meeste kere gehanteer is, sedert die eerste keer wat hy/sy 'n ring gekry het, was 'n Dikbekwewer (Thick-billed Weaver), twee Swartkeelgeelvinke (Southern Masked-Weaver) en 'n Janfrederik (Cape Robin-Chat)--almal is al vier keer gevang.

Verdere interessante vangste was twee Swartkeelgeelvinke wat die eerste keer by Witkoppies in Rietvlei NR op die 1ste Desember 2018 deur Martin Steyn gering is en nou by Moreleta Kloof NR weer gevang is. Beide is mannetjies—miskien het hulle wyfies gaan soek. 🐦

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Image 1 - map

African Crane 30 Nov 2015, 07:47 +2	4	⋮
Crested Barbet 28 Nov 2015, 16:17 +2	3	⋮
African Green Pigeon 28 Nov 2015, 05:11 +2	2	⋮
Spotted Thick-knee 28 Nov 2015, 00:37 +2		⋮
Hadeda Ibis 27 Nov 2015, 11:32 +2		⋮
Common Myna 27 Nov 2015, 11:30 +2	1	⋮

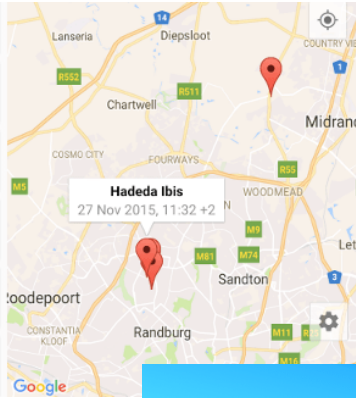


Image 2 - data

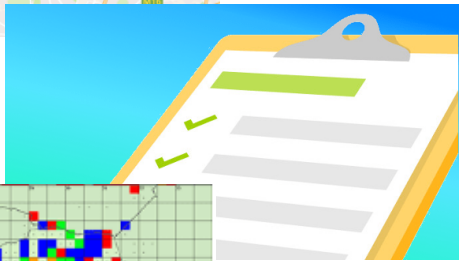


Image 3 - lifelist

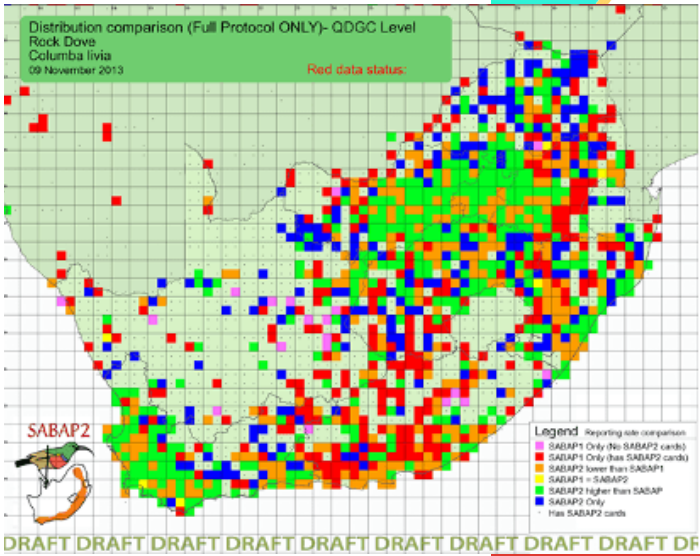
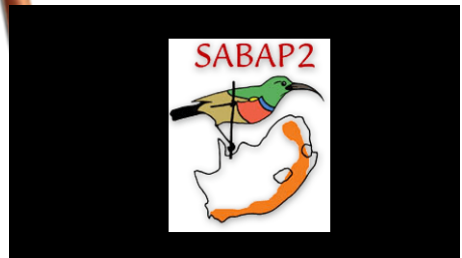
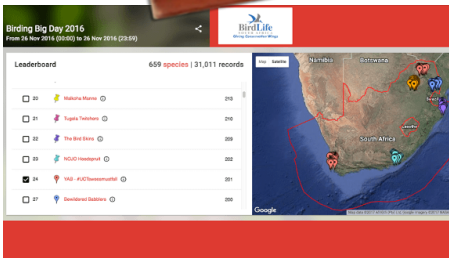


Image 4 - protocol

Image 5 - share





Chasing Forest Phantoms

Darren Johnston

When you meander through the Magoebaskloof pass for the first time, your mind begins to run wild at the sight of the spectacular mountainous landscape that unfolds around you. What lies beyond those undulating hills of pine plantations, and between the patchwork of tropical fruit groves in the valley below? Venture past the padstals, eateries and homesteads, and wander down the back roads, jeep tracks and pathways, and you begin to peel back the layers of what this forested wonderland has to offer.

In birding circles, the Magoebaskloof area is hallowed ground. Dense pockets of Afromontane forest, deep ravines and mistbelt grasslands are home to a diverse world of bird-life. Here, in and around one of South Africa's

last remaining tracts of indigenous forest, you could be rewarded with sightings of some of southern Africa's most elusive and sought-after birds. If you look and listen closely, you can encounter Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers fluttering through the treetops, Black-fronted Bush-shrikes foraging in the upper canopy and White-starred Robins rummaging through leaf litter in the undergrowth.

But finding specials in this enchanting, yet somewhat unforgiving world, is by no means a walk in the park. Dense thickets, tangled creepers and fern-filled forest floors make this a real needle-in-a-haystack scenario (and the very reason you should hire a local bird guide).

Amble down Woodbush Forest Drive and you're dwarfed by some of the tallest trees in



Darren Johnston

*Crowned Eagle/
Kroonarend*

Africa. The Three Matrons, Misty Grove, and O'Connor Lane – the legacy of forest pioneers from the early 1900s – will leave you gazing skyward in wonder. Indigenous trees like stinkwoods, yellowwoods and bushwillows are the real champions of forest dwellers. These sky-reaching sentinels draw in high flyers like Cape Parrot and Crowned Eagle. Under the dappled shade of chestnuts and 'hairy Lucys', Grey Cuckooshrike, Cape Batis, Olive Bushshrike and Yellow-streaked Greenbul congregate in bird parties – a strength-in-numbers strategy against resident raptors like the African Goshawk. Stumble upon one of these socials and prepare for double-takes and incessant neck-cranking.

In the open sections and along the forest fringes, Swee Waxbill and Magpie Mannikin

waft through clumps of head-high grasses. In the early mornings, these tall strands are draped in silky webs that wrap around your forehead if you're leading the way. Pollen irritates your nose hairs and tiny ticks get to work on ring-barking exposed leg.

Then the clouds begin to roll in. This is the edge of the Wolksberg and northern reaches of the Drakensberg, and naturally, the weather can turn quickly and the heavens can open in minutes. It's the last place you want to be when the weather gods are angry, particularly when they're hurling bolts of lightning across the valley.



Darren Johnston

Woodbush Forest



Darren Johnston

Yellow-streaked Greenbul / Geelstreepboskruiper

Darren Johnston

Barrat's Warbler / Ruigtesanger

The odds are stacked against us, but just like that, forest phantoms start to appear out of nowhere.

In my mind's eye, a Narina Trogon's ghost glides beneath the leafy treetops. Its darkened silhouette is merely a shadow of its striking green and scarlet self.

Somewhere in deep shrubbery, a low-hanging branch becomes a Barrat's Warbler that announces its presence by breaking into song. In my periphery, an orange ground thrush is a fallen autumn leaf that miraculously grows legs and darts across the base of a strangler fig.

Then, something small and green comes into view. "Twinspot! There, among the lichen on that log." Could it be? I fumble for my binoculars... it vanishes before I can get a good look.

I rue another missed opportunity by lamenting with David (the legendary David Letsoalo), our bird guide, about the bad luck we've been having: "Yesterday, we went to

Agatha to look for the Bat Hawks, but couldn't find them." "They're there – you must just look harder."

I take this in my stride and begin to wonder: what if all of this *is* real? What if this isn't just my imagination?

David reaches to the ground, picks up a feather and places it in my hand, then whispers: "trogon". I hold the quill up to the light for a closer look. The black with white trailing edge closely resembles those left behind by laughing doves in my garden. But I digress. Is this the forest trying to tell me something? What if that was a trogon after all? I realise this might be the closest I get to seeing one in the flesh, and drop it into my top pocket as a memento.

Later, I fall asleep to the hooting duets of African Wood Owls amidst trickling streams and whispering trees, and put to bed any preconceiving doubts about whether this mystical world and its forest phantoms exist. 🦉

Rietvlei owl hunt

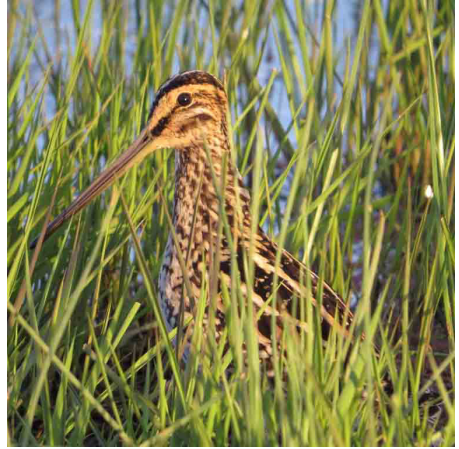
Ivonne Coetzee

When by chance I spotted on the Friends of Rietvlei Facebook page that two seats were open for an Owl Hunt on 7 February, I jumped at the chance. It was organized by Etienne Hinrichson, and Madeleen van Schalkwyk of Rietvlei took the wheel. We were

only six birders plus our very knowledgeable and experienced safari-vehicle driver. Due to the flooding after the heavy rains of the weekend, we were worried about the submerged river crossings, but we could leave as planned. It stands out as one of the most magic



Eurasian Hobby / Europese Boomvalk



Ivonne Coetzee

African Snipe / Afrikaanse Snip

night-time birding drives ever.

I had gone a bit earlier to try and tick the Eurasian Hobby which hangs around on Hartebees Road. I was lucky to get excellent views and even a photograph or two.

On the way back to reception, I also stopped at the first drift just south of the helipad. I had ticked both Cuckoo Finch and Quail Finch there two days previously, but this time they did not appear. Still, I was very happy to see two African Snipe.

At reception, everyone was anxious to leave immediately, before the set time of 18:30, to catch the Eurasian Hobby which Madeleen had told them about. It had obligingly waited in the same spot as earlier until everyone had seen and photographed it. An exciting start! As we crossed the bridge at Marais Dam, we ticked both Little Egret and Green-backed / Straited Heron.

Marsh Owl was our first owl seen, quartering the field at Loop Road. We also found several nightjars, one of which, a Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, posed next to the road for our first owl photograph.

Driving through the Reserve at night was certainly magic. The animals were not as skittish as sometimes during the day. Ghostly shapes of Eland glided away in the dark. A very relaxed

group of Rhinos crossed the road, obviously having taken a good wallow in the mud. Madeleen informed us that there were seventeen Rhino in the reserve, but as there were too many bulls, nine would soon be relocated to another reserve. The Rhino were de-horned once a year. She was happy to report a decline in poaching since fence and security upgrades, and none had



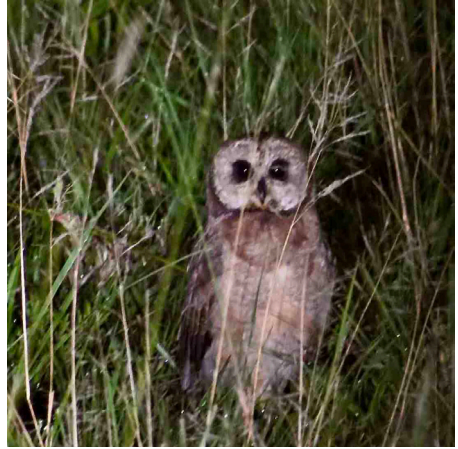
Ivonne Coetzee

Rufous-eared Nightjar / Rooiwagnaguiltjie



Ivonne Coetzee

Spotted Eagle Owl / Gevlekte Ooruil



Marsh Owl / Vlei-uil

been poached the past few years.

We spotted the scarce Grysbok and even Duiker. Jackal went about their business, unperturbed. One of the birders swore he saw an aardwolf (brown hyena) close to some restless zebra. Countless Thick-knee and Wattled Plover had annexed the roads and were reluctant to move. A large nightjar flew up and was tentatively

identified as European Nightjar, but since no photos could be taken, it was not ticked.

Some roads were still impassable, but we visited Frog Pan on the Witkoppies Road in the hope of seeing White-faced Scops Owl on the fence, where they had been found by Madeleen earlier. No luck, but an owl suddenly flew up and settled on one of the steel grids of a power pylon - Spotted Eagle Owl!

Next, we again saw Marsh Owl, which settled in the grass some distance away. This time we all got a photograph.

We had been in the reserve four hours already. Surely Madeleen had been obliging above and beyond the call of duty. On the way back to reception, two calling Nightjars flew up at the crossing to the Main Lapa. This time, beyond a shadow of doubt, Rufous-cheeked.

Six happy birders took home wonderful memories and special photographs. No, we did not see Grass Owl or White-faced Owl, or African, European or even Square-tailed Nightjar. We had not bargained on any of those, even though those are known to be in the Reserve. But we could leave very happy and with new ticks and photographs for our life lists. A great big thank-you to Etienne and Madeleen for organizing this very special event. 🦉



Ivonne Coetzee

Rufous-eared Nightjar / Rooiwangnaguiltjie



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We are interested in anything related to BLNG, BLNG outings, birding-related travel, interesting observations of birds and their behaviour, and the conservation of birds and their habitats. Contributions can be in the form of articles, photo essays or a single photo with a descriptive caption. Potential cover photos are always needed (ideally a close-up of a single bird, with some space above and below the subject, uncropped and high-res). Questions that we can pose to experts as the basis for a short article are also welcome.

Length

There is no length restriction; the average article ranges in length from 1 000 to 2 000 words.

Text

Please submit all articles in Word, not as a PDF.

Photos

Photos should be submitted separately (not embedded in the Word document), and at their original resolution (preferably at least 1 MB in size as a general guideline, and not exceeding 10 MB, except in the case of potential cover photos), even though they will not be displayed at high resolution in the final publication. As the overall resolution of the entire document is reduced to create the final product, images originally inserted at low resolution can then appear as very low-quality images when published. Photos should preferably be in jpeg format.

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